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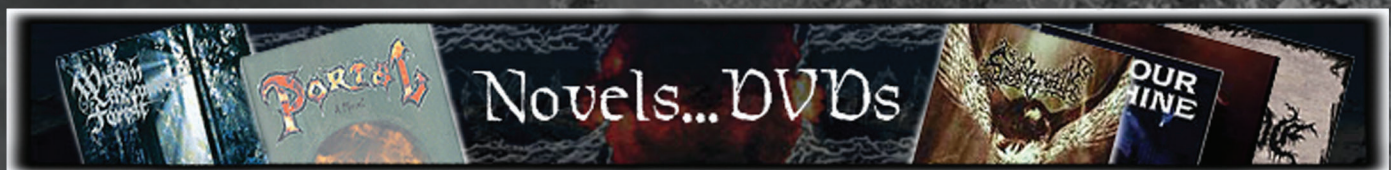


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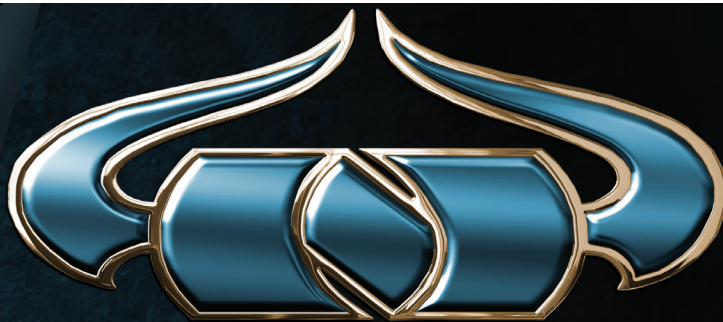
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HEAVEN'S METAL

YOU'VE GOT FIVE MINUTES!

This is what it's like for a performer when the show is about to go on... I've got five minutes to finalize this issue, and this little note is the final piece of this issue's puzzle. How do we sum up this issue in such short a time? I dunno. The metal was exceptionally good this issue. We hope you'll agree. There's lots of good tunes to be jamming to ... and I'm talking about new music. We know how good the classics are, but the fresh, new metal hitting these ears is tight, heavy and especially good turned up loud.

We brought a Readers' Poll to these pages for the first time since its rebirth back in 2004. Congrats go out to Disciple, who certainly got its friends and fans to let us hear their voice. Do yourself a favor and go see them live if and when they come near your town. Oh, and in the "top secret" category, there's some side project band called St. Chaos that finds Brad Noah and many of his friends jamming to some real raw and heavy stuff. I didn't name any names, but I bet Matt Baird from Spoken and Lester Estelle from Stars Go Dim are familiar with these jams. Oh, and one other piece of late-breaking news: The Crucified is playing Cornerstone this year. Don't be a dope ... go!

Doug Van Pelt



ELEMENTS

- 06 METALTRACKS** Glass Hammer, Kekal, X-Sinner, Theocracy, Monotheist, Godfear Impellitteri, Jerusalem, and more.
- 10 BELIEVER** Chris Beck interviews one of the best drummers, ever, Joey Daub.
- 12 SYMPATHY** Mike Larson talks with the mysterious artist that's now a band. Huh?
- 14 BILL MENCHEN** Jeff McCormack unmasks the many faces of this guitarist.
- 16 READERS' POLL AWARDS** You wrote this one. Remember?
- 18 ALBUM REVIEWS** 16 of 'em.
- 20 COLUMNS** Pastor Bob and Steve Rowe.

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LOCKED AWAY...

In the mid to late 80's the thrash scene was thriving in both the secular market and in the Christian market. Bands like Vengeance Rising, Deliverance, Sacrament and Believer were leading the pack in the Christian thrash circuit. In 1989 somewhere in Pennsylvania a demo tape would emerge that would make a long lasting impression on the Christian Thrash scene. That demo was called... *Totally Possessed*.

The band... **THRESHER!!!!**

The band would release and distribute only 500 copies of that first demo tape, selling it at their shows and through print magazines like *Heaven's Metal*. That demo would catch the eye of many people in the scene and in the industry. This tape, if you can find one today, goes for quite a few bucks on sites like eBay! After the success of the demo the band would next record a couple of tracks that would be included on two much-sought-after compilations for REX Records. This would garner even more attention on this young and thriving band. Next, with label interest in both the Christian and Secular markets, they would go in and record what would be their next and ultimately their final, full length release entitled *Here I Am*. *Here I Am* was to be their breakthrough album, and was recorded live in the studio with very few overdubs at Lifeline Studios in Pennsylvania. But the band would begin to deteriorate as they battled to try and balance both music and their personal lives. The album would ultimately never be released and has been locked away for close to 20 years, until now!!! After all these years, Rxxx Records, in conjunction with Thresher, is set to release this long lost treasure upon the world in a Limited Edition CD format. Eight never before released tracks, these tracks, while locked away for years, have stood the test of time and are still relevant and stand up with the best of them in today's Thrash scene.

On May 1st 2009 this CD can be yours, and we hope it touches your life as it has ours! Pre-orders have begun now and the first 100 copies only will come with a BONUS CD recording of that much sought after, highly collectible, demo, *Totally Possessed!* That's right, the first 100 orders only will be shipped as a 2-CD set with a copy of the EXTREMELY Limited edition demo that started it all!

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AVAILABLE SOON: THE LONG-AWAITED DEBUT OF

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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads



By CHRIS BECK

Hailing from Finland and playing melodic metal with orchestral elements since 2002, HB finally broke through internationally with their last album, *Frozen Inside*. With the release of their new album, *Piikki Lihassa*, this female-fronted quintet hopes to continue the momentum and follow where the Lord leads them. We recently had a chance to interview lead singer Johanna Aaltonen about the recent developments with HB.

CB: HB's lyrics are very Christ-oriented. How does the band approach writing lyrics?

JA: Antti Niskala, who plays the keys and composes our music, also writes the lyrics. Telling about our faith and our Lord is the reason why this band exists. We don't want to hide our message, though some people find it irritating that our lyrics are so straight-forward. Basically, the lyrics are about normal Christian life – the sorrows and pains we might have, but also about happier times and being grateful to God.

What was the process of recording *Frozen Inside* in English after originally recording it in Finnish?

Probably the hardest part was writing the lyrics. It's not easy to express the same thoughts and feelings in a different language, especially when you are not a native speaker. We received a lot of help from a friend who speaks English as her first language. We are also eager to record our new album, *Piikki Lihassa*, in

English. Hopefully that will be possible in the near future.

Are there any difficulties with being the only woman in the band?

I kind of feel like I just have a bunch of big brothers that I'm hanging out with. We argue, laugh and sometimes even cry together. In the past, we've had other girls play in HB which was really fun, but I've gotten used to being the only woman in the band. I've had a really good time being with the guys, though I hear a lot of jokes about being a blonde and am constantly asked to carry the heaviest stuff when we are on the road, ha-ha!

Are we missing an opportunity to reach the world because there are so few female-fronted Christian bands that play symphonic/gothic/melodic metal?

Perhaps the perception is metal is considered to be more guys stuff and that girls prefer softer kinds of music. Also, some people don't understand that heavier music can be suitable for Christians. Whatever the reason is, I definitely encourage all Christians to do what they have a passion for and follow what God is calling them to do.

News bullets

The Three Rivers Prog Festival has announced that **Glass Hammer** will perform on August 9th 2009 at the Pepsi Theater in Pittsburgh, PA, USA. Be sure to check the Glass Hammer website for details. The *Glass Hammer Live at the Tivoli* DVDs are available and getting great reviews. See their website for details. [glasshammer.com]

Bombworks Records have reissued *Through the Reflection* from Mexican death metal band **Lament**. Bombworks has also recently signed **Fearscape** to their label; they hail from Australia and play a melodic progressive black metal. Look for a new EP from them in 2009, entitled *Nightmare Hymn*. Due to family and work commitments, drummer **Paul Demitrovich** has resigned from the band, drumming duties will be announced at a later date.

Also recently signed by the label is California's **Dark Lay Still**, who plays a Scandinavian-influenced symphonic black metal. The band will release their debut in 2009, which will feature several songs updated and rerecorded from the original demos as well as several brand new songs.

Bombworks prog/power metal band **Adiastasia** will soon be heading into the studio to record the new album, titled *War of the Worlds*, which will be released worldwide in the second half of 2009.

Bombworks is excited to announce the signing of **A Hill To Die Upon**. Hailing from Monmouth, IL, the band – with 2 brothers at the core – plays their own brand of brutal melodic black metal. They have been together for quite some time now, starting out several years ago as a hardcore band, but quickly finding their calling in the desolate wastelands of extreme black metal. Though calling the US home, the band sounds more akin to the homeland of their major influences, possessing a decidedly European sound reminiscent of bands like Behemoth, Dimmu Borgir, 1349 and Satyricon. Technical atmospheric melodic brutality is the band's MO, and they certainly deliver. They will record with Kevin Rendleman at Trash Rocket Studios in Peoria, IL and Eric Tordsson (Crimson Moonlight) at Dark Chamber Studios will mix.

Finally, Bombworks is happy to announce the signing of **Monotheist**. Hailing from Orlando, Florida, Monotheist plays their own brand of progressive extreme metal. A melting pot of death, black, thrash and progressive metal, Monotheist writes complex compositions that extend the boundaries of extreme metal. Furious riffing and ferocious drumming walk hand in hand with progressive stanzas and melodic nuances, painting an aural masterpiece of intensity. Each song has an epic feel and flows effortlessly from one stanza to the next without ever losing the interest of the listener. The band self-released a 7-song demo titled *Unforsaken* back in 2007, and the band is writing new material for their full length debut to be released on Bombworks in the summer of 2009. Influences include Death, Extol, Opeth, Suffocation, Emperor and Immolation. You can check them out, including tracks from their demo and a teaser of a new song, at myspace.com/monotheistmetal.



METAL BY OBEDIENCE

Faith Factor



By **NORMAN KIERSZNOWSKI**
 Edited By **JONATHAN SWANK**

Faith Factor was formed in 2005. Norm "Ski" Kiersznowski had been called to use his talent for God's purpose. Ski set out to form a Christian power metal band and it was to be called Faith Factor. The name "Faith Factor" implies: "What is your faith? What do you believe in and how far along in that faith are you?"

From its inception, God has been the very focal point of this brand new ministry – a ministry conceived by the will of God for His purpose. Ski brought together the initial line-up: Jim Alesi (guitar) – who later left to spend more time with his family; Blaine Booth (guitar); Chris Matusieski (guitar/keyboards); Joe Manghan (bass); and Dan Jefferson (drums). In the winter of 2006, the band signed with Metallic Archangel Records and went into the studio to record a three song EP entitled *070/7/07*. The EP served as a calling card and was shopped around for a larger recording contract all over the world. The acclaimed EP sold 700 copies in 7 months in Europe – especially in the underground German metal scene – and landed them a coveted spot at the Keep It True Festival. It also drew the attention of Retroactive Records, with whom they subsequently signed a new record deal. In the late fall of 2008, they went back into the studio to start work on their first full-length album entitled *Against A Darkened Sky* (see review *Heaven's Metal* #78), which was released worldwide November 11th. Today the new album is sold internationally through Brutal Plant Distribution. The band is very thankful for the opportunity the Lord has entrusted them with, and they are ready to go anywhere He calls them to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Relates Ski, "The secular metal world knows who we are and what we are about; they have accepted us with open arms. We talk with as many fans as we can to share our life's experience walking with our Savior and how He has changed our lives. People are always interested and eager to listen and we plant as many seeds of the Great Commission as we can. The band is currently putting together our *All Divine in '09 tour*. Metal blessings to all this year – 'Faith is not by seeing, but every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Read your Bible and be blessed." [faithfactorband.com]

The new **Theocracy** album *Mirror of Souls* is now released in Europe, America and Japan. The Japanese version contains the bonus track "Wages of Sin," exclusive for this release. *Mirror of Souls* was mastered by Mika Jussila (Nightwish, Stratovarius, Children of Bodom) and the booklet design was created by Felipe Machado Franco (Iced Earth, Ayreon, At Vance). The album is a masterpiece in melodic power metal and should not be missed if you enjoy quality melodic metal! Theocracy is also proud to welcome **Val Allen Wood** as their new lead guitarist! Val is an amazing talent, and will be taking over the guitar duties along with **Jon**, allowing **Matt** to step fully into the vocalist/frontman role. The band is very excited about this development, and the new lineup will be hitting stages in the U.S. and Europe soon. [myspace.com/theocracyband]

Jerusalem is working hard with completing their new album. Look for a spring/summer 2009 release at earliest. [jerusalem.se]

Shadows Of Paragon's full length album will soon see the light. The title is *Through The Valley Within*. Musically it's varied and brutal black metal. Three tracks of their upcoming album can be heard at myspace.com/shadowsofparagon.

Laudamus, the heavy metallers from the North of Sweden, now have a Myspace site at [myspace.com/laudamusmusic]



New Mexico based **Ultimatum** have announced that they will head into the studio immediately to begin recording an album of covers titled, *Lex Metali*, which translates to "Metal is Law." The band will be recording the album in Albuquerque's Site 16 Studios. The CD will include covers of Metallica's "Creeping Death," Motorhead's "Iron Fist," Vengeance Rising's "Can't Get Out," Moshketeer's "Looked in Chains," Judas Priest's "Steele," Mortification's "Gut Wrench" along with 6 other songs. *Lex Metali* is scheduled for release in 2009 via Retroactive Records.

Bestir is the name of a newly formed progressive/black/death metal band from North Carolina. They are currently working on a 5-song demo/EP, and trying to play as many local shows as possible. [myspace.com/bestirofficial]

A transatlantic raw/melodic black metal band called **Swine Suicide** have formed and are recording new material. Similar to anonymous projects like **Horde**, **Flaskavsae** and **Frost Like Ashes**, the band members are unknown and go by the metallic name of "Chalice" and "Sword." Tracks can be heard at myspace.com/swinesuicide.

Roxx Records is releasing the long lost debut full-length album by **Thresher** (See ad on page 5 for more details).

Classic band **Godfear** seems to be reforming with the *Pound for Pound* line-up; **Sean** on Vocals, **Mark** on guitars, **Mike** on bass, **Steve** on drums. They are talking about a 4th release and possible tour. Find out more at myspace.com/godfearband.

At press time, **Sacred Warrior** was in the studio recording a brand new album that will be true to their classic heavy metal sound. [myspace.com/sacredwarrior777] Unfortunately, on February 7, 2009, keyboardist **Rick Macias** left this life for an eternal one with the Lord. Our condolences to Rick's family and friends. See sacredwarrior.net for any updates.

In case news of **Mike Lee**'s departure from **Barren Cross** (as reported last issue) was misinterpreted, the band wants everyone to know they will be continuing on as Barren Cross (without Mike Lee) with new music in the works.

METAL TRACKS

Page eight



AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Great issue! I especially liked Steve Rowe's column. GBU, Dad.

—Larry Van Pelt, via internet

Ed — Thanks, Dad!

I SMELL PAPER

Out of all the emails you receive, this is probably different. Did you change printing on the new *Heaven's Metal* mag (Driver on the cover)? The paper looked brighter, the print looked clearer and the toner smelled different. I work for a printing company, that's why I ask. :)

—Robert (Death is Gain), via internet

Ed — I remember you in high school — every time they passed out a test, you sniffed it!

WHAT GARY SAYS

Time for a "What So and So Sez" for Gary Lenaire. If you have done one already, what issue was it in? 2050 is the name of the band and features Erik M. and Victor M. Of course, most people know about his book he released in 2006. We really need to start praying for the musicians in Christian music. Tom Blaszczyk, via internet

Ed — I agree about the prayer suggestion. This is a good article idea. I'll look into it.

TOTALLY MISGUIDED

As a long-time subscriber to *Heaven's Metal* magazine, it is with sadness that I must ask for the removal of Pastor Bob from the pages of *Heaven's Metal*. Pastor Bob is an apostate due to his now pro-homosexual support. Just letting my opinion be known. Thanks,

—Steve Jim, via internet

He is not pro-homosexual. I think you have misunderstood what he said. An angry person has twisted his words and made him sound like he supports sin. If I thought one of my writers — especially a columnist — supported sin, I would most likely fire him so fast you'd never know.

WAS THAT A TOURNIQUET QUOTE?

Tourniquet is still my favorite band of all times. Any news on what they're up to now? It's been about four years since their last album, not counting the re-issues. They are still doing some tours, but are they ever going to record again? Thanks.

—Daniel Skuya, via internet

Ed — I forwarded your letter to drummer Ted Kirkpatrick, but have not heard back yet. The band has just re-issued *Crawl To China*, as you may know, and is playing a show soon in Germany.

[nothin' but] News bullets

The sure-to-be-smoking new release from **Impellitteri** is entitled *Wicked Maiden*, features **Rob Rock** back on vocals and is due out any day now. Hear samples and learn more at myspace.com/impellitteriofficialsite.

Soundmass announces the signing of the United Kingdom band **Ecthirion** (formerly Axiom) for the release of their debut 5 track EP *Apocalyptic Visions*, due out in early 2009. With guest vocals by **Eugen Dodenhoeft (Far Beyond)** and **Azazel Frost (Frost Like Ashes)**, expect epic orchestral metal with Viking and black metal tendencies (ala Dimmu Borgir). [myspace.com/ecthirion]

Fires of Babylon (featuring Rob Rock on vocals and reviewed in issue 78) is finally seeing a US release through Retroactive Records and should be available by the time you read this.

Nightmare Records presents Nightmare Metal Fest II to take place March 20-21. Thirteen bands playing over a two day period, including Vicious Rumors, Seven Witches, Krucible, Sacred Dawn, Six Minute Century and more. Recent line-up additions now include Theocracy, whose *Mirror of Souls* release is quickly becomes a favorite of metalheads.

Rowe Productions announces that the new **Mortification** album is due a June release, and will be entitled *The Evil Addiction Destroying Machine*.

X-Sinner's label Image Records on the East Coast has just negotiated a mainstream distribution agreement that will put the band's new album *World Covered In Blood* into such well known national retailers as Best Buy, Barnes & Noble and F.Y.E. stores just to name a few. The band is extremely excited about this new opportunity and is hopeful that more live performance dates will follow as well.

The Legends of Rock show in Germany will take place April 4th, 2009 and features **Bloodgood**, Tourniquet, **Grammatrain**, **Verra Cruz**, Audiovision (their first live show since **Christian left Namia**) and **HB**, plus an unplugged stage featuring sets by Tourniquet, Audiovision, **Lightmare** and others. Follow details at legendsofrock.de.

Australian tech death metal band **Dei Elithaeon** are pleased to announce that Mercury from **Fearscape** will be the permanent vocalist/lyricist for the band. Dei Elithaeon are currently working on a debut release expected to come out some time in 2009. For a taste of what to expect listen to a few pre-production demos at myspace.com/deielithaeon.com.

The 7th full length album from Indonesia/Canada based experimental / progressive artist **Kekal** will be the first NePlusUltra Music release. The first pressing will be a special digi-pak release, hand-numbered and limited to 777 units in honor of this landmark occasion. The title *Audible Minority* is based on the fact that the music on the album has mapped itself into the extreme minority status: something beyond recognition of the musical norms. Almost 2 years in the making, *Audible Minority* was constructed during various personal events of the band members' lives. It will be available through an exclusive deal with Open Grave Shop.



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LAMENT - THROUGH THE REFLECTION (Special Edition) Melodic death metal for fans of Dark Tranquility, Mortification, and early Living Sacrifice (available March)



ARNION - FALL LIKE RAIN (EXPANDED EDITION): Brazilian thrash masters debut with precision, melody, and brutality! For fans of Kreator, Exodus, Ultimatum!



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BELIEVER

Anticipation ... it's made us wait

BY CHRIS BECK

THE REUNION OF BELIEVER HAS BEEN TALKED ABOUT AND ANTICIPATED MORE THAN ANY OTHER BAND IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN HEAVY METAL. RELEASING THREE CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED ALBUMS OF TECHNICAL THRASH METAL, BELIEVER GAINED A SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING DURING THEIR TIME. IT ALL SEEMED TO COME TO AN END WITH THE RELEASE OF THEIR LAST ALBUM, *DIMENSIONS*, IN 1993. FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, WHAT MANY BELIEVED THE UNTHINKABLE HAS HAPPENED – THE REFORMATION OF BELIEVER AND A NEW ALBUM, *GABRIEL*, SCHEDULED TO BE RELEASED BY METAL BLADE IN MARCH.

The Reunion

CB: What finally made it all come together?

Joey Daub: Kurt (Bachman) and I had been talking for a while about getting together to jam and maybe write a couple of tunes. We hooked up and the chemistry was

still there so we started writing.

Is a reunion something you thought would eventually happen or did things just fall into place?

We didn't really think of it as a reunion; things just fell into place. Everything felt so natural that we just ran with it.

How did the contract with Metal Blade come about?

Howard Jones from Killswitch Engage went to bat

for us and discussed a possible deal with Brian Slagel from Metal Blade. Then a company called Clandestine Music stepped in. They are ex-A&R guys that started this company, so they are well known in the industry. It's great, because they know the system and provide very detailed support and advice.

The New Release

Fifteen years is a long time to go between albums. Even though during this time Joey, Kurt and the other members of Believer played with or produced other bands, such as Fountain of Tears and Living Sacrifice, music and the music industry have changed significantly in the past fifteen years. What will Believer sound like today and will their music be relevant? Some people are skeptics, to be sure.

What should listeners expect to hear on the new album? Have you attempted to "modernize" your sound or have you stuck to the old formula?

We write the way we write with music that influences us, life experiences over the years, current experiences and so on. I believe that fans of all the previous albums will enjoy it, as well as new fans we may gain. Like I said, it's Believer.

Were the songs on *Gabriel* written recently, or were they written over the last several years?

All the songs are current. They were written over the past year or so. Rehashing stuff we might have come up with over the past several years wouldn't be acceptable to us. Fresh is best.

What topics will some of the songs on the new album cover?

Topics that are personal to what we have or are going through and topics that interest us in general. We want our fans to have their own take on the topics – make the song their own in a sense.

What were some of the challenges you experienced while

with all of them. As I listen to our discs, there might be certain songs that have more of a feeling to them as a whole. By that I mean I might remember something that happened during the writing or recording of a song that pulls me closer to it. That's what I mean by better than others. Oh, and sometimes I prefer groove to speed.

Do you stay in touch with any of the bands and their members from back in the day or continue to follow any bands today?

Thanks to the internet, I am able to stay in touch with some people. Living Sacrifice are probably the people I am in touch with most, although I talk with others from time to time. My family keeps me pretty busy, but I try to take time to see what the bands are up to. We also keep in touch with Sacrifice, who we toured the USA with during the *Sanity Obscure* tour.

The Present and Future

Now that *Gabriel* has been recorded, the band must wait patiently to see how the album performs when it is released. Will there be a tour? Having a contract with options for three total albums, will there be future releases? Time will tell. Meanwhile, the competition has gotten better, and the music industry has a way of teasing you with success, stringing you along, until you realize all the hard work has gotten you nowhere because your music isn't part of the most recent trend.

How much touring, if any, do you anticipate doing in support of the new album?

Nothing extensive at this point, but we plan on doing some shows and festivals. We are currently rehearsing as we speak,

"Hopefully we can make our old fans happy and get a bunch of new ones.."

recording *Gabriel*?

Putting up with each other's crap was probably the biggest challenge. Ha-ha! Nothing really bad. It was actually pretty painless.

The Past

Along with bands like Tourniquet, Deliverance and Vengeance Rising, Believer was considered one of the titans of Christian heavy metal. How this status is achieved is arguable, but for those who appreciated the complexity and professionalism of Believer's music, this label certainly seems appropriate. The release of Believer's new album also gives us an opportunity to reflect on their past.

Looking back, I imagine it seems that your time together as a band came and went very quickly. Do you have any regrets or wish you would have done anything differently?

Not really. It was all a learning experience. It would have been nice to have had internet access back then, but who knew? Ha-ha! A real video would have been nice but you take what you get. It was good times.

A much-debated topic is which Believer album is everyone's favorite. Now that you are several years removed from them, looking back, which album is your favorite and why?

I don't think I have a favorite. I feel that there was something different about each one. Each album was at a certain time in our lives and each portrayed that time period. There are some songs I like better than others but for the most part I was happy

so we will see where it goes.

What do you think of the state of the music industry in 2009—specifically, the heavy metal industry—compared to when you last released an album in 1993?

There are a ton more bands in the scene than there were back in the day. A lot more experimental stuff as well. The playing ability of these younger bands is unbelievable. The stakes are much higher now. It will be interesting to see how our new music is received.

What, specifically, impresses you about some of these bands, and could you name a few in particular that you enjoy listening to?

Well, it's not just the younger experimental bands, but all the bands in that genre. Bands like Into the Moat, Between the Buried and Me, Protest the Hero and, of course, the great Mr. Bungle and Dillinger Escape Plan. These bands take everything to crazy berserk levels. We have some crazy parts ... they have crazy songs and albums. Hats off to their playing!

What does the future hold for Believer?

We'll have to wait and see. Hopefully we can make our old fans happy and get a bunch of new ones. We're stoked that we'll have much more metal to unleash.



Why Believer

ARE THE BEST CHRISTIAN METAL BAND EVER!

By Loyd Harp

1. Believer pushed musical boundaries. *When Extraction From Mortality* came out in 1989, I was floored – and a little creeped-out by the album cover (I was only 16 at the time). It was a thrash masterpiece in every way. Every song had a brilliantly unique and unusual intro, followed by an onslaught of complicated riffs, speed-speed-speed, and words that defy any accusations that Christian metal had shallow lyrics. But the real trick was this: they didn't rest on their laurels after this masterpiece was released. *Sanity Obscure* continued the experimentation with strings and classical compositions that *Extraction...* only dabbled in. Then came *Dimensions*. That record was written on another planet. There is nothing that compares to it – Christian OR secular.

2. Believer were respected both inside and outside the Christian community. Believer was the first extreme metal band singing about Christian themes to get any real, consistent, positive feedback from the respected secular metal mags. *Metal Maniacs* couldn't get enough of them. They were also one of the first Christ-centered acts to play shows with bands who had blatantly anti-Christian groups. Although this move was controversial at the time, it's hard to deny the courage it took to pull such a stunt.

3. Believer never compromised their lyrical stance. Believer, more than any other band I can think of, had this uncanny ability to simultaneously write about profound theological and Biblical issues, interwoven with scientific subjects, philosophical insights, and personal interests, all the while maintaining a clear and consistent evangelistic and, dare I say, apologetic message.

4. And yet, Believer never adopted the dreaded "fortress mentality" that plagues so many. As boldly biblical as Believer's lyrical content was, they never came across as "us against them." They stayed clear of the finger-pointing that sometimes goes on in Christian extreme music, all the while offering a better way to those who don't believe.

It's been 16 years since we last heard from the Pennsylvania band, but few have left such a lasting impression. Even if they weren't re-formed and releasing a new record, I'd still argue that Believer were the best Christian metal band ever. "You can disagree with me, but you'd be wrong!" – John Peel



THOUGH *ANAGOGIC TYRANNY* IS NOT THE FIRST SYMPATHY RELEASE, IT IS THE FIRST WITH A FULL LINE-UP AND HAS ESTABLISHED THEM AS A SERIOUS CONTENDER IN THE DEATH METAL GENRE. I WAS ABLE TO ASK DEREK FROM, THE MAN BEHIND SYMPATHY SINCE ITS INCEPTION, A FEW QUESTIONS VIA EMAIL.

ML: *Anagogic Tyranny* is a pretty crushing album – solid production, great songwriting and amazing performances. Let's talk a bit about the process that it took to get here.

DF: I started writing for the album during Christmas 2006. I got the riffs and arrangements ready for 6 songs. By then, Jeff (Lewis) had written a few songs, so by about February 2007 we had 9 songs written and arranged. At that point, Jeff was coming out to my place once in a while to record and learn the stuff that I had written, and vice versa. I think it wasn't until March or April 2007 that Jeff wrote the final song for the album: "Potter's Field." After that, we both tracked all the rhythm guitars and sent them off to Jim (Austin). Jim learned all the songs in a few months and hit the studio in October of 2007. I think his tracking took him about 3 days, and after he was done, the studio e-delivered the tracks to me for editing and mixing. We ended up with about 26 drum tracks per song, which is a lot, and makes for a complicated mix. While I was mixing, I was working on the lyrics and the themes for the album. I always know before hand where I want to go with these things, but it is still a long process to bring it all together. And since I am quite busy outside

of music, it took me a long time to get everything done.

This album features a full line-up. How did you meet each other?

I met Jim when I was teaching in the music department at Briercrest Schools. Our department was looking for a drumming instructor, and since I was a fan of his band Into Eternity, I emailed Jim and asked if he was interested. He took the position for the year, and I got to know him then. Jeff and I met for the first time because I had heard that a former member of Mortification lived near me. I was living in Toronto at the time and Jeff was regularly coming into T.O. for work. I emailed him one day and we got together and decided that it would be fun to work together.

Not all the members of Sympathy live close to each other, how did you approach writing this? Did the approach differ than previous projects that you have undertaken? How?

Well, the distance does suck. It basically meant that both Jeff and I independently



wrote the songs for the album without very much input from anyone else. It would have been better, I am sure, if we could have all gotten together to write, but that just wasn't possible this time around. We have some ideas for how to do that in the future. In the past, it was easy. I did everything and didn't have to ask opinions, etc. That was efficient, but this is better.

Are you happy with the final outcome?

There are always things that you hear that you wish could be different. I wish that my pinch harmonics were as nice sounding as Jeff's are! I know that it would have been better if Jim had been watching my every move too – he has a great eye for detail and it would have helped a lot to have him around while I was working on the album. But on the whole, I am satisfied with the result, especially considering that in some ways this was a first album for Sympathy.

Is there anything you would change with this?

Yeah, I wish I could change some of my performances and things like that. "The devil is in the details," as the saying goes. More time and more ears almost always improve an album.

In addition to the amazing musical technicality and crushing brutality, there are some great lyrics on this album. Was there any particular focus for

you as a songwriter as you penned these?

Well, the lyrics are drawn from a series of books that I really liked. I found that the author's narrative was so rich that I could really relate to the characters. Plus, the series was extremely metal, in the sense of it being dark and foreboding, so it was the perfect inspiration for writing. Each of the characters has their own struggles, and since those struggles are the kind that normal people are continually going through, I thought it appropriate.

Are there any favorites lyrically or musically on the album? (Any that are more personal than others?)

I think that my favorite song lyrically is the first track. I can really relate to it. And similar to that song, I really like the lyrics in "Ours the Grave." Musically, I like the weirdest and most difficult riffs the best, like those in "The Iscariot Aspect" and in the last bit of "On A Bloodied Cross."

I love to hear technical things about albums, and seeing as how this is truly on par with the upper echelon (at least to my ears) of metal albums production wise, I would love to hear some of the tech stuff. What did you record on? What amp for guitars, etc... If you don't mind that is.

I have a Pro Tools rig and all the rhythm guitars, bass, keys and vocals were recorded on it. Jim recorded his drums at a studio in Regina, Saskatchewan called Touchwood. They are a pro-studio, so they have every sort of mic and preamp that you could want, and they

record using Pro Tools. Jeff recorded his leads at his place, and I'm not sure what studio equipment he is running right now. For amps, Jeff and I used his Mesa Triaxis for the rhythm guitars, and he recorded his leads with his Mesa Studio Pre. We tracked all the rhythm guitars with a 7-string NJ Series Warlock, and Jeff used a 7-string Ibanez for the leads. For vocals, I use a Focusrite preamp and optical compressor with a Rode vocal mic.

Production-wise, we were trying to get a vintage/ natural sound. So we didn't replace all the drums with samples, didn't over-process or compress, and used very little EQ or comp. It makes the album sound a bit dated because it's quieter and doesn't sound "up-front." But that's exactly what we were going for. When I think about what my favorite albums are, they are all from the era when music wasn't over compressed and you turned it up if you wanted it to sound loud. Hopefully, Anagogic Tyranny is like that. If you want to sound loud like Behemoth, turn it up. Otherwise, it should sound natural like albums from prior to 1996.

HEAVENS



BILL MENCHEN

The many faces of...

INTERVIEW BY JEFF MCCORMACK

BILL MENCHEN – YOU’VE SURELY HEARD OF HIM, RIGHT? HE HAS SHOWN UP QUITE A FEW TIMES IN THESE PAGES IN THE RECENT PAST YEARS; AND IF YOU ARE A LOVER OF METAL FROM THE 80’S AND 90’S ERA, YOU HAVE PROBABLY EXPERIENCED SOME OF HIS WORK. HE IS THE SHREDDING GUITAR POWER BEHIND SUCH ACTS AS FINAL AXE, REV SEVEN, REDEEMER, TITANIC, SEVENTH POWER, AND NOW THE NEWEST RELEASE BEARING HIS NAME – MENCHEN!

JM: You’ve been around pretty much forever, right? (laughter) You’ve had much of your music catalog re-released pretty much over the last two years or so, so your name seems to pop up all over now. What is it that has kept you going all these years in metal?

BM: I started my first Christian band, Redeemer, back in 1984, so yes, I have been around a while. I guess music is just in my blood. I don’t know if I made a conscious effort to stop, but I kind of did. Over the years there have been times where I have just

felt like what is the use. But eventually I just have to pull the guitar out of the closet and start playing again. As a Christian, I always just have to say “What can I do?” and “What do I have at my disposal that I can use for the Lord?” I have tried to get into other area of ministry at church, but it just seems to never work out and I end up back in music.

Give us a brief rundown of your musical journey.

Well, Redeemer plugged away from 1984-89, and released the cassette recordings



Redeemer

that have recently been reissued on CD. Redeemer eventually just became two of us, me and bass player Paul Brecht. He had hooked up and was offered a position in the band Seventh Sign (with Dave Enos of Emerald fame). Within a few days I had hooked up with Keith, and felt bad, not knowing what to say to Paul. He told me he was offered the new position, so everything worked out. It wasn't like we ever broke up, we just felt like we completed our calling with that band. He actually had converted his parent's garage into a well soundproofed area, and Final Axe used to practice there, too.

Final Axe existed from '89-'91, then Rev Seven goes from '91-'99, with a couple year break in there when we did Titanic. I first put Rev Seven together in 1991 with my cousin Bruce on guitar, and we put out a cassette that year. I then moved to Vegas in 1994, and put out a second album by myself. Titanic formed in late '95, released the CD in '96, and broke up shortly after that. 1997 was a quite year musically, and then I got my first computer with recording software in 1998, so I went back and started recording more Rev Seven stuff by default, putting out an album in '98 and '99.

How did the second Titanic CD come about?

In late 1996, we had almost enough material for another album, but the group broke up. Around 2001, Matt Hunt (Retroactive Records) called me, and wanted to reissue the first Titanic album. It did real well sales-wise, so he called me up a year or so later and asked if we had any more material. I spoke with Simon and we finished up the recordings in my studio, and that became the second album.

During those phone conversations, Matt discovered that we had been in Final Axe back in the day, and he said he could move a thousand units of that, too, on the name alone, even though he had never heard the album (laughter). There had also been a second Final Axe CD that was never finished, so we eventually finished that, and that became *The Axe of the Apostles*.

How did the third Titanic come about with a new singer?

After Titanic ended, Simon changed the name to Subdux, but never got it off the ground. When Matt Hunt called about a possible new release, he was not in favor of a name change after all that was done to promote the name Titanic. So, we kept the name, and brought in a new singer David St. Martins. He was great, had a great voice, and the whole album was just so automatic. He came in the studio and just churched out the lines, it just seemed so automatic, and he really knew how to deliver the lines. He had a great way of

Final Axe

harmonizing with himself, making things sound so big. **Recently you have released two albums with The Seventh Power, the new Titanic album, and now the newest Menchen album. Why have you splintered off into so many bands recently, and as chief song writer, why not just stick with one?**

Well, Titanic was a part of the life of some friends and I, and has its own history for what it was. Not saying that there will never be another Titanic release, but that is kind of compartmentalized for me. The Seventh Power, although it is me singing, I didn't keep going under the Rev Seven name, because it seems every few years someone points out to me another band somewhere in the world who goes by Rev Seven, believe it or not. When I had written another album worth of material, Matt and I discussed putting it out, but wanted a new name. So, The Seventh Power is basically a band I can always release music under, since it is mainly me, so it will continue as long as I have breath.

The story of the name came about after I bought these new pickups for my guitar, called V7. I thought it sounded like a good name for a band, so I started messing with it in Photoshop, and eventually made the seven real small beside the V, so it was V to the seventh power. It just seemed too abstract, so it never went anywhere, and we kept discussing various names for about two years. One day he called me and asked me what that old name I had come up with was, and I told him V to the seventh power. He then blurted out, "how about just the Seventh Power," and something just grabbed me then and there. So, I immediately went to the internet to see if theseventhpower.com name was available, and it was, so I bought it. Other than that, the name has no real meaning, it just sounds mysterious.

The Menchen album came about because we were doing a bunch of recording with Robert Sweet a little over a year ago, and we had him for a couple months while Stryper was not doing anything, so Matt and I hired him to do a bunch of songs in a bulk deal. As a side note, in 2009, there will be three new releases featuring Robert on them. We are reissuing Titanic's *Maiden Voyage* with all new drums tracks, redone from top to bottom. People may think it won't be very different, but let me tell you, he went ballistic and it is a major difference. We also had him redo the *Screaming in Silence* album as well as the Final Axe *Beyond Hell's Gate*. So while we had Robert, Matt suggested we throw together an instrumental album, and told us to stretch out and go nuts. I had some unused songs written some time before, so I used them as a basic structure and told Robert to use them as a foundation. In an effort to beef it up even more, I then recalled that a year or so earlier I had been acquainted with Tony Franklin, and thought he was huge

Rev Seven

The Seventh Power

and outrageous, so I contacted him. His price per song was higher than we could afford for the project, so Matt turned the idea down. I chose to hire him for at least one song, just to say he was on there. He did the song "Train Crossing," and when Matt heard it, he thought it was unbelievable. So we went back to Tony and asked for an album price, and he made us a great deal, so I mailed him all the tracks and he did just great – slamming/playing through the whole thing. When Matt heard it, he felt it was too stellar to not have vocals and that it felt like verse/chorus, verse/chorus; so we worked with Ken Redding, as we had just re-issued his old band's album (His Witness). So, what started as just another side project turned out to be a major project when done.

What does the future hold? With all of these projects released recently, do you have one band that you feel is the main project?

No, nothing that I can say right now. These are mainly projects, but I can't really say nothing will ever happen with them. I really can't say much at this point ... and this will sound cheesy, but I kind of feel like God will have me do something in the not too distant future, but I'm not sure what. It is just too early to say, I just have to wait to see what God wants me to do in respect to playing out somewhere. There are a good amount of quality musicians I could use; and every once in a while when talking to them, ideas get thrown around. I just feel if I am going to leave home with guitars and amps – if God is going to put me out there – it will be for a darn good reason and not just to go and rock. I've done enough of that over the years. After doing music as long as I have, the idea of pounding the pavement, trying to get a following, etc., just doesn't appeal to me at this point – though not because of the work involved. I am just searching my own heart on these issues, and I have a desire to get out and play, but I really want something that the Lord designs and destines; and whether it gets famous or not doesn't matter, it just has to be right. There has to be a real reason, and mission for it; a deeper purpose than just playing.

Aside from the three reissues you mentioned coming this year, is there any new Bill Menchen music forthcoming?

No, I don't think so. I have Ken Redding's vocal tracks on two other songs from much earlier, which may lead to a second Menchen CD, but it would require a lot of work and there is no time frame at this yet. I have many ideas for a new Seventh Power release, but nothing started at this point. I bought a new house this year and am still trying to put the house and new studio together.

MENCHEN
CENTAL

#1 DISCIPLE



FAVORITE BAND 2008

HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS

#2 DEMON HUNTER

#3 BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE

#4 THEOCRACY

#5 BARREN CROSS

#1 KEVIN YOUNG (Disciple)



FAVORITE VOCALIST 2008

HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS

#2 RYAN CLARK (Demon Hunter)

#3 ROB ROCK

#4 MICHAEL SWEET (Stryper)

#5 TIM LAMBESIS (As I Lay Dying)

#1 ISRAEL BEACHY (Disciple)



FAVORITE BASSIST 2008

HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS

#2 STEVE ROWE (Mortification)

#3 JASON WISDOM (B.T.A.)

#4 DOUG PINNICK (King's X)

#5 JOHN COOPER (Skillet)

**HEAVEN'S
METAL**

READERS POLL 2008 AWARDS

#1 THE FAMINE



FAVORITE NEW BAND 2008

HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS

#2 CHILDREN 18:3

#3 STRICKEN

#4 HEAD

#5 GRAVE ROBBER

#1 ROB ROCK / DRIVER



FAVORITE INTERVIEW 2008

HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS

#2 BARREN CROSS

#3 CAGE

#4 VIRGIN BLACK

#5 SYNNOVE

#1 DISCIPLE



FAVORITE LIVE BAND 2008

HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS

#2 DEMON HUNTER

#3 AS I LAY DYING

#4 ROB ROCK

#5 THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

#1 BRAD NOAH (Disciple)**FAVORITE GUITARIST 2008****HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS**

- #2 OZ FOX (Stryper)
- #3 CARL JOHANN GRIMMARK
- #4 TIM MCTAGUE (Underoath)
- #5 SETH HECOX (B.T.A.)

#1 TIM BARRETT (Disciple)**FAVORITE DRUMMER 2008****HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS**

- #2 ROBERT SWEET (Stryper)
- #3 AARON GILLESPIE (Underoath)
- #4 TED KIRKPATRICK (Tourniquet)
- #5 YOGI WATTS (Demon Hunter)

#1 KEVIN YOUNG (Disciple)**FAVORITE LYRICIST 2008****HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS**

- #2 RYAN CLARK (Demon Hunter)
- #3 MATT SMITH (Theocracy)
- #4 ANDREW SCHWAB (Project 86)
- #5 DALE THOMPSON (Bride)

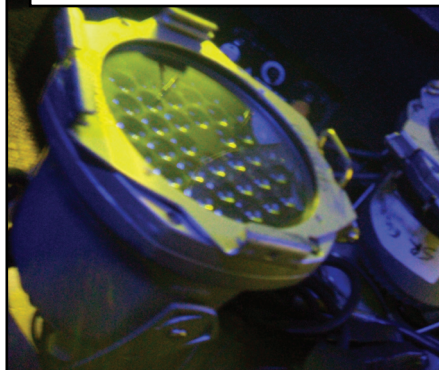
Congratulations to Disciple and the rest of our Readers Poll winners and honorable runners up! It was truly a tight race in all categories. Once again let us state why we use the term 'favorite' instead of 'best', which is: to diffuse and eliminate **unhealthy** competition within the body of Christ whenever possible. Thank you readers for sharing your voice with us, and helping us to give well-deserved honor to some of the artists who invested their God endowed talents with excellence and passion over the last year.

FAVORITE HEAVEN'S METAL FANZINE WRITER:

- #1 DOUG VAN PELT
- #2 PASTOR BOB
- #3 CHRIS BECK
- #4 CHRIS GATTO
- #5 JEFF MCCORMACK

#1 SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY (Disciple)**FAVORITE ALBUM 2008****HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS**

- #2 STORM THE GATES OF HELL (Demon Hunter)
- #3 MIRROR OF SOULS (Theocracy)
- #4 DICHOTOMY (Becoming The Archetype)
- #5 SAVE ME FROM MYSELF (Head)

#1 TRADITIONAL HEAVY METAL**FAVORITE STYLE OF METAL 2008****HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS**

- #2 THRASH
- #3 POWER METAL
- #4 METALCORE
- #5 PROGRESSIVE METAL

#1 SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY (Disciple)**FAVORITE ALBUM COVER 2008****HONORABLE RUNNER-UPS**

- #2 DICHOTOMY (Becoming The Archetype)
- #3 BACKBREAKER (The Showdown)
- #4 MIRROR OF SOULS (Theocracy)
- #5 STORM THE GATES OF HELL (Demon Hunter)

ALBUM REVIEWS



BOARDERS

THE WORLD HATES ME

Okay, fans of old-school metal – you know who you are, always pining (sometimes even whining) for the music of yesteryear – listen up! You have a reason to “Jump for Joy” (as one song here exhorts), because this Italian band – recently signed to Retroactive – has the hooks, the attitude and the chops to deliver a metal rush unsuitable for the faint of heart. Yeah, this metal is not only fun, it’s really good. If you can think about everything you loved about metal in the 80’s and early 90’s (the galloping of Maiden, the heavy rhythms of Priest, the hooks of Dokken, the ballads of Scorpions, the slow-tempo riffs of Accept, the raspy vocals of Lemmy, the crunch of Metallica and the attitude of Megadeth) then you’ve got a good idea what’s going on here. In fact, they even have an extremely well-done cover of “In My Darkest Hour” by Megadeth, the band I think they most closely resemble overall. Negatively speaking, they wear their influences too well, the “close your eyes” choruses in the male-female duet “Never Alone” just a bit too reminiscent of “Close Your Eyes” by Lita and Ozzy. Still, we don’t get to hear this kind of metal so well-performed very often – with an uplifting lyrical bent to boot – that it hardly matters. Indulge. [Retroactive] Jonathan Swank



ARNION

FALL LIKE RAIN

This Brazilian thrash assault borrows heavily from country mates Sepultura – and also to the late, great Pantera – in style. Rinaldo Macedo’s beefy guitar work is the album’s best feature. Driving drums complete the sound neatly, yet can become overly repetitive at times. Pedro Neto vocally attempts the yelling delivery of Max Cavalero, but with less desirable results. Eight songs are sung in English, with two instrumentals, and one song in the bands’ native Portugese; and the lyrics are overtly Christian. Don’t expect Tourniquet – this is simple, mosh-inducing thrash metal. Take it for what it’s worth. [The Black Tiger Company] Chris Gatto

KING’S X

GRETCHEN GOES TO LONDON (DVD)

This DVD captures a magic time for the band, but the footage is a camcorder from the back and, while it’s something a fan would certainly watch, it’s nothing compared to the big-dollar budget DVD releases recently by Muse, HIM, Skillet, Mute Math, U2, etc. The audio that is synced with the footage, you’ll be glad to know, isn’t the condenser mic on the camcorder, but instead a good recording, which is very nice. This would be a bargain for \$10 or \$12, but at \$19, it leaves a little to be desired, considering what you normally get for that kind of price. [Molken] Doug Van Pelt

BLESSED BY A BROKEN HEART

PEDAL TO THE METAL

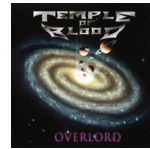
Last time I checked, this band with the cheesy emo name was a mediocre metalcore band. Dramatic style change and big label contract and suddenly they’re thrust into the limelight, garnering some very polarizing opinions. The change? BBABH has married their metalcore sound to retro 80’s glam rock – and I’m not talking Motley Crue glam, think Survivor “Eye of the Tiger” – keyboards and all. It’s a hard pill to swallow (just listen to “Move Your Body”!), but you have to give the boys points for originality. I just hope this isn’t a new trend: big hooks, breakdowns, and leopard headbands. [Century Media] Chris Gatto



MENCHEN

RED ROCK

Bill Menchen’s (Final Axe, Titanic, The Seventh Power) latest project was initially envisioned by Retroactive owner Matt Hunt as an instrumental album. I for one am glad they recorded a proper album including vox. The all-star lineup this time is Robert Sweet (back again on drums), Tony Franklin (bass/Whitesnake) and Ken Redding (vocals/His Witness). The short of it is that this record shreds! The production is outstanding, as usual, and the playing and writing are superb. Amazingly, Bill succeeds at pulling off distinct projects time and again, and although I don’t always see the need for having four different bands, if the quality’s there, then why not? And it’s here. With the heaviness of *Dominion and Power* without the brooding quality and melodic punch that’s more akin to Titanic, this record will satisfy fans of melodic heavy metal. [Retroactive] Loyd Harp



TEMPLE OF BLOOD

OVERLORD

The sophomore release from Alabama thrashers finds another tight album of what reminds me of old-school thrash (and I, being old-school, use that term as a compliment). Tight and fast music with high octave vocals reminds me of some of the great stuff of the 80’s. I feel the songwriting has improved, but would have blown me away more if the vocals didn’t often seem to get lost in the mix, even more so than they did on the first release. Good production, but great production would have given this much more power and energy. [Independent] Jeff McCormack



THY WILL BE DONE

WAS AND IS TO COME

Honestly, we somehow missed this one when it was released in 2007. These guys from Rhode Island have an impressive metal groove, especially considering they fall somewhat in the metalcore genre. There is just enough of a healthy mix of Pantera, post *Reborn* era Living Sacrifice and Demon Hunter influenced metal here to keep them out of the quagmire of an over-saturated metalcore scene. No melodic choruses or hardcore breakdowns here, and the lyrics are solid. “We must rise above the hate to light.” (“Threshold of the Spirit”) Look for their new release this spring, but in the meantime check this one out. [Stillborn] Jonathan Swank

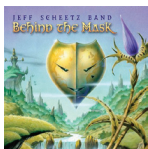


HB

PIIKKI LIHASSA

While comparisons to Nightwish have been obvious in the past, HB broadens their musical horizons on *Piikki Lihassa* with more male vocals from Antti Niskala and the increased use of keys and orchestral arrangements in each song. Johanna Aaltonen’s voice sounds stronger and more confident, perhaps from the comfort of singing in her native tongue. Initially, it was difficult to get into *Piikki Lihassa*, as all the lyrics are sung in Finnish, but repeated listens have revealed the album’s quality to the point that I now like it better than their last release, *Frozen Inside*. Fans of female-fronted melodic metal will definitely enjoy this. [Bullroser] Chris Beck

Surf this: jeffscheetz.com, bullroser.com, km-guitarslinger.com, nightmarerecords.com, eternalmyster.co.nr, myspace.com/guerreroarkangel, themustardseeds.com, souljournersband.com



JEFF SCHEETZ BAND BEHIND THE MASK

This is the second album Mr. Scheetz has released under the above moniker. For those who have not kept up, this is not solo shredding of the guitar master, but a full-on rock-blues trio. This is not metal, but don't let that stop you from enjoying this fantastic album. Think Hendrix, Jeff Beck, SRV, and Eric Gales with some funk like King's X and Extreme. The songs are catchy and the production is crisp and clean. Matt Waddill's vocals are soulful and the perfect fit for this music. Yes, there are several instrumentals where Jeff gets to display his guitar prowess, but all of the tunes are written so that Jeff's playing compliments the songs. Give this one a listen for a great change of pace. [Bam-Zoom!] Todd Walker



VARIOUS ARTISTS

SCANDINAVIAN METAL PRAISE
It's been some time since we've had a new metal praise album. SMP presents metal adaptations of modern worship songs

originally performed by Hillsong, Maranatha, etc. The production is below par, as the guitar has too much distortion and the drums are slightly tinny, but the female vocals sound great and more than offset this. All songs but one are sung in English. The versions of "Praise Adonai" and "Worthy is the Lamb" are outstanding. If you've wanted your worship music to be heavier, then check this out. [Bullroser] Chris Beck



KEITH MILLER OVER THE ABYSS

Here's a well-produced independent project from a solo artist/instrumentalist from Minnesota, who has actually been around for awhile, but who is new to these ears. Keith (aka the "guitar slinger") Miller is a technically competent player who noodles in the vein of Satriani and the like. It's not surprising then that most of the songs – which rock with a crunchy, mid-tempo groove – serve as a platform for his solid, yet sometimes restrained soloing. My only criticism is the lack of song variety, but instrumental rock enthusiasts will enjoy. [Independent] Jonathan Swank



SCLERATA

SKELETON'S DOMINION

Album number two from the Brazilian band sees them continue with their strong Euro-metal styling, but the sound this time seems darker and raw compared to their debut. Germany's Gamma Ray would be a close comparison to Sclerata now. Excellent fast/slow guitars, keyboards, Casagrande's meandering melodic vocal harmonies, and an accordion (that most metal of instruments) on the last two songs. Lyrics are more subtle this time, but the cover art looks like someone beheaded Stephen King's killer clown character. Recommended. [Nightmare] Chris Gatto



VARIOUS ARTISTS

4-WAY NOISE EXPLOSION

Christian grindcore has always had its obstacles to overcome. Christians won't embrace it, because it's too brutal; and non-Christians shun it, because of its lack of emphasis on gore, violence and pornography. But there has been a recent underground resurgence of grind bands. There are four bands on this release, each contributing 8 or more songs:

Long Suffering: One-man band from California, but plays with real instruments. Features screeched/raspy vocals, and strange, almost-other worldly sound clips from preaching and testimonies.

Dehumanize: Features Brock of Eternal Mystery and Phil of Encrypt or but doesn't sound like either of those bands. When Phil sings, it's in the low growl variety, but when Brock sings, it's distorted vocals lower in the mix. Lyrically, they focus on the corruption of the American church.

Corpse under Construction: Danish act creating minimalist noise/grind with harsh vocals, a drum machine, and not much else. The results are much more entertaining than you might think.

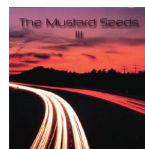
Eternal Mystery: Louisiana-based project uses real guitars, distorted vocals and what sounds like a drum machine to creating some serious earsplitting noise. On the 4-Way split, their use of samples from preaching, the news gets tedious due to overuse (where's the music?). However, the full-length finds a bit more balanced approach, and is much more enjoyable to listen to. [Independent] Loyd Harp



ARKANGEL

TODO POR AMOR

The production is poor on this CDR, but this power metal band from Bolivia shows promise. All songs are in Spanish, but there's much to like – big guitar riffs, wailing solos, tasty vocal harmonies, and the occasional keyboard. A bit of a throwback to some of the better unsigned bands of the 80's, but definitely worth checking out. [Lament] Chris Gatto



THE MUSTARD SEEDS

III

10 years... That is how long we have had to wait for the 3rd release from these guys. Led by session bassist extraordinaire

Matt Bissonette (DL Roth, Jughead, Satriani), this tremendous band has finally given us more music to enjoy. Layered with luscious harmonies, this release does not disappoint. While it is not as heavy as its predecessors, it still hits us with great musicianship, thoughtful lyrics and their trademark lush vocals. Enough cannot be said for their tremendous and underrated songwriting. Think King's X and Galactic Cowboys with a more melodic nod to the Beatles. Get it. [Independent] Todd Walker



SOULJOURNERS

MIND CONTROL

While Dream Theater re-defined prog rock for metalheads way back when, not many others have come along and done much in terms of innovation. Souljourners are no exception. They don't bring revolution to the table with this disc, they just bring brilliant musicianship, chops galore, and perfect tone and production, where neither the vocals, keyboards, or solos annoy the ears. In fact, vocalist/guitarist Michael Coutts sounds great. The middle of *Mind Control* tends to bog down with less-than-memorable jamming, but tunes like "Permanent Scars," the ballad "I've Waited," the lightning quick jam section in "Sapphire World," "Crazy Times" (featuring Phil Collen) and album closer, "The Avenger" are all standouts. [Independent] Doug Van Pelt

PASTOR BOB'S INTERNATIONAL REPORT

By Pastor Bob

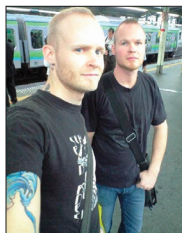
Greetings metalheads! I hope 2009 is a great year for all of you. I am encouraged. As I travel internationally, I see Christian metal becoming a lot healthier than it has been for a while. There are some great fellowships springing up all over the world. People are getting back into the Word, and energized about their faith and their music. I wanted to tell you about two things that I am excited about for the new year – besides all the festivals. First, I will be doing a daily podcast called, "Five Minute Sanctuary." It will be a five minute daily devotional that, I hope, will help you to get into the Word a little more, and strengthen your relationship with Jesus Christ. This new series will begin March 1st. Second, Jim LaVerde and our worship team are in the studio right now recording our newest Sanctuary Praise record. This is the first one in 16 years! It's about time, isn't it? There are some great musicians and singers on here – I am sure you will enjoy it. It will be released in time for Cornerstone this year. Once again, here are three reports from some exiting ministries around the world.

[myspace.com/pastorbobbeeman] [sanctuaryinternational.com]



Norway, Guatemala, Switzerland & metal

David Husvik, Jacabo. O Ya' Aqov & Tom Liesch



David Husvik (Extol)

Sub Church – Oslo, Norway

Sub Church is an Oslo-based, alternative, Christian fellowship. We've been around for about 12 years since the first time we gathered in 1997. Many of us had a dream to make a gathering for creative, alternative people, as well for Christians to get inspiration.

Bands like Selfminded, Silver, Antestor, Lengsel and Extol looked upon Sub Church as their home, and many of us still feel that way about Sub today. While we tried to create a warm fellowship, we at the same time prayed to God that He would use us to bring light to the city of Oslo. For many years we had a music festival to materialize the wide range of creativity that God gave us, and in 2002 we established our own concert venue, Sub Scene. Over and over God has blessed us and given us what we need. He had truly met many of our yearnings. For 5 years now, the government has supported us with money to run this venue and to run a non-alcoholic cafe where young people can spend time. We let all kinds of different bands perform on our stage – small, big, Christians or not. Our cafe is filled up with metal, punk and emo kids on an everyday basis, people with different needs and searching for a home. After 12 years we now start to see stuff we prayed to God for happening. 2008 was a year with a lot of activity on several levels. One of the greatest things we saw was the establishment of two new Bible groups for new believers. Many kids have started to attend our Sunday services and have become disciples. Though we sometimes feel a big need for wisdom, we really see God work in the midst of our church and the people. When God starts a change among people, someone else wants to destroy the good things that are about to happen. If you read this and find our ministry inspiring, please remember Sub Church in your prayers. Without Him and the prayers from people around us, we can't go on. Thanks a lot! Blessings from Norway,



Jacabo. O Ya' Aqov Guatemala

The history began in '88 when the drummer of an old heavy metal band called Sangre Humana (Human Blood) converted to Christianity at a Whitecross concert, and he parted from the band and started a new band called Guerreros that, with the years, became Guerreros Del Metal

(Metal's Warriors). Their lyrics were very straight and said the truth about the people that live with a mask and said that they are Christians. In 1989, another band Vox Dei (a traditional hard rock band) came out with the album *Quitate La Mascara*. In '92, the American band Vengeance Rising came and did a very good concert and showed the non-Christian metalheads that the Christians can make very good music. The movement of the metal started harder then after: in 2002, with the Mexican death metal band Lament; in 2006 two other Mexican bands appeared, Deborah and Exousia, doing a great show; in the same year Boanerges came and performed the first show in this land. But in 2007 God used another person, that had the vision to do a very different show with a Christian black metal band called Hektor ... 'cause until that date, there was never a band like this that played black metal and used Christian lyrics. The show was successful. Also at this time, the non-Christians were impacted with that band, 'cause they were the first that used "corpse paint" and used Christian lyrics. After that show, in March of 2008, came the South American band Antidemon. They had several shows in Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico and Guatemala, and Guatemala was the last show in their tour. At this time, just 5 people are working to lead the way for the Christian scene, and doing it through a website: undarkmetal.org. We hope that we can lead the people with God's hands. Well, this is the short history of Christian metal in Guatemala and we are asking God to do very well the work. [undarkmetal.org]



Tom Liesch, Director Solid Festival, Switzerland

On November 1, 2008 a dream came true – the very first edition of a new Swiss event called Solid Festival took place. 1700 people from all over Switzerland – and even a few guests from France, Germany and Italy – came to the town hall of Buelach, a city

situated slightly north of Zurich. We had bands with all kinds of music styles, including Sonicflood (USA), a special from the O.C. Superstones (USA) with their original vocalist accompanied by a Croatian ska band, Spoken (USA), Falling Up (USA), John Reuben (USA) and Mammuth (Sweden). It was encouraging to see so many young people getting encouraged by the bands music and messages – each band gave a public interview in a separate room. The audience was really close to the artists and a lot of people said the festival had a very personal touch even though we had that many visitors. For Swiss crowds it's really special to see big Christian bands on stage – the costs to fly the artists over the big pond are pathetic and only a handful of promoters take that risk. It was a unique experience for the whole region in particular and it's only one fruit of what God is doing in the region of Zurich. It's our goal to share the good news through artists that are like everyday people, but who have experienced the true and living God. (This is not about religion or tradition!). Music offers so many good opportunities to tell others how you feel about things, what you're struggling with, what makes you happy and thoughtful, etc. We believe music can touch hearts and are hoping that Solid Festival can continue this fall. There's still so much to do and we're looking forward to everything that is yet to come in the future! We want to keep living our dream. [solidfestival.ch] [myspace.com/solidfestivalch]

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

CONTENTMENT

One problem we in the western world are facing right now is a growing inability to be content with who we are and what we have. Even in some churches there is a big push to get more, more, more. Over the past couple of years, God has challenged me to be content. I have close family members and friends who work two jobs, 60 hours a week, just to get more: a bigger house, better location, bigger TV, newer gaming system. It seems endless. What ever happened to the simple joy of family time and just living life with the basics that we need?

Sure, we must work hard and provide as best we can for our families, but how do we lose our focus on the most important things in life? God's will must come first and then our families. One day at the park with the family... Take a picnic, play some family football games and simply be content to be alive and around enough to enjoy our families and see all God's blessings.

Many of my friends and family have deluxe houses, huge plasma TVs and surround sound home theatre, but are too busy working to pay for them or to ever enjoy them or their kids. Plus, what they have seems to be never enough. My

13 year old son Leighton asked me recently, "Dad, why can't we get a big TV, surround sound system and a Wii game station?" I was sitting on our sofa with my arm around him watching sports on our big, but cheap TV through our 25 year old stereo. I asked Leighton a question in return: "What would be better ... all the other 'stuff' or me sitting here with my arm around you watching the Cricket (Aussie National sport)? If we had all that other 'stuff' I would have to worry about getting more money and Mum would never be home but out working two jobs." He replied, "Yeah, I would rather have you and Mum around. I love you Dad." That is contentment, and in my book success.

I encouraged Leighton to be content with what we do have and not focus on what we don't. I told him that God wants us to "be still and know that He is God." I shared with Leighton about the tremendous contentment I have found in my life. Find contentment and you set yourself free from stress and worry. This life is not supposed to be a McDonald's life. It is much more rewarding and relaxing being a "barbeque in the backyard" with the family life.



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